DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 355 199 SP 034 317


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TITLE Teacher Research and Gender Equity. Occasional Paper No. 143.
INSTITUTION Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Inst. for Research on Teaching.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Dec 92
NOTE 27p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 1992).
AVAILABLE FROM Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1034 ($3).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Change; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Education; *Feminism; Higher Education; Identification (Psychology); Interpersonal Relationship; Personal Narratives; Politics of Education; *Sex Bias; *Sex Differences; Sex Discrimination; *Sex Fairness; Social Change; Teacher Education; Values
IDENTIFIERS Collaborative Research; *Teacher Researchers



ABSTRACT

This paper examines the teacher research movement from feminist perspectives of achieving gender equity and social change in schools. The paper presents the personal experiences of two middle-class, Caucasian, women professors and teacher educators in their 40s, in a dialogue between the two. The paper discusses the complex role of women's values, relations, multiple identities, and political imperatives and their effects on educational research to improve students' educational opportunities. It examines how the issues of choice, opportunity, equal access, and equity can limit visions of what teacher research might address and enact within agendas for school reform and change, by defining them only in relation to already established male structures and practices. The paper argues that teacher research should question how roles as teachers, students, parents, or administrators are socially constructed in multiple ways, some of which involve gender. The paper concludes that such points of understanding as gender, class, race, or age are all in dynamic relationship to each other, to changing frameworks for work and life, and to the journey toward the "freedom of inclusion." (Contains 25 references.) (JDD)



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# TEACHER RESEARCH AND GENDER EQUITY

Sandra Hollingsworth
and Janet Miller

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Published by

The Institute for Research on Teaching
College of Education
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034

December 1992

This work is sponsored in part by the Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, Michigan State University. The Institute for Research on Teaching is funded from a variety of federal, state, and private sources including the United States Department of Education and Michigan State University. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position, policy, or endorsement of the funding agencies.

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**Abstract**

This paper examines the teacher research movement from feminist perspectives of achieving gender equity and social change in schools. Taking up the challenge of educational research to improve to improve students' educational opportunities in school settings, the authors speak to the complex role of women's values, relations, multiple identities and political imperatives in accomplishing such a charge. The authors' personal stories, articulating feminist stances in their teaching and collaborative research with teachers, stand as background for the argument.

## Teacher Research and Gender Equity[1]

Sandra Hollingsworth and Janet Miller[2]

Sandra Hollingsworth and Janet Miller are middle-class, Caucasian, women professors and teacher educators in their 40s who have also been engaged in separate six-year teacher-research collaboratives. Drawing upon their personal experiences, the authors reflect upon teacher research from various and shifting feminist perspectives on achieving gender equity and social change in schools. In particular, the authors speak personally about the complex role of social positions, values, relations, and political imperatives in accomplishing such a charge.

### Janet Miller Begins

I can't really write or talk easily about "teacher research and gender equity" as a topic, per se, because I don't see/feel my work as a teacher-researcher and with other teacher-researchers in that framing alone. It's a framing that has become one important basis for discussions and analyses of possibilities for school change and for both students' and teachers' enhanced educational opportunities (Klein, 1992; Sadker, Sadker, & Klein, 1991; Weiler, 1990). And, certainly, I agree that gender equity must be considered in discussions of the political contexts of teacher research. But, if seen as an end in itself, "gender equity" becomes a framing that, for me, obscures the intersections of gender, race, class, age, sexual preference--and any of the other multiple social constructions and positionings that collide within my various and shifting contexts and identities.

For example, my contexts include university classrooms where I teach, and national conference arenas, where I present versions of the intertwined nature of my teaching and research. These contexts also include K-12 classrooms, where I often go to work with teachers and to teach

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[1]Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, April 1992. To be published in S. Hollingsworth and Hugh Sockett, (Eds.) Teacher Research and Educational Reform (NSSE Yearbook for 1994). Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education.

[2]Sandra Hollingsworth, assistant professor of teacher education at Michigan State University, is a senior researcher in the Institute for Research on Teaching, writing on the Students' Response to Literature Instruction Project. Janet Miller is associate professor of curriculum and instruction at National-Louis University.

students as part of on-going inservice programs. They also include my participation, with five K-12 teachers, in an ongoing six-year teacher-researcher collaborative. In all of these contexts, I struggle with an expectation of myself, shared often by my students, by classroom teachers, and by my fellow teacher-researchers, to be identified as "expert," to be the one who will provide the answers or who will at least point the way. That expectation, of course, comes with the traditional academic and hierarchical positioning of professor as creator and conveyer of knowledge.

But the expectation to be the "expert" also emerges from, and gets complicated by my internalizations of social expectations for females to be caring, nurturing, helpful. I often have manifested that internalization of "good girl" by expecting myself to be able not only to be helpful to others but also to look for and provide answers for others, if that indeed is what they express as their need. With that particular "good girl" identity, I often have posited myself as helper, as one who attempted to please others' needs and expectations, often to the detriment of my own. Because that identity was reinforced consistently in my white, middle-class background, I have had to struggle with its persistent eruptions, particularly in my work as a female academic (Miller, 1983; 1986).

And so, as a long-time "good girl," I continue in my attempts to understand larger social, cultural, economic, and political sources of that "good girl" construct and to identify ways in which I am complicit in its manifestations (Miller, 1992). Given my particular classed and raced enactments of "good girl" behavior over the years, it would be very easy for me to slip into the role of "expert" or authority, all in the guise of "helping" or attending to others' needs and interests. Thus, for example, I continue to work against my internalizations and enactments of socially constructed versions of women who, because of their "essential" characteristics of nurturer and care-giver, are deemed most suited to work in the "helping professions," such as teaching. At the same time, even as I work against such stereotypic representations of women, of myself, I also do not want to negate those aspects of nurturance and attentiveness that I do wish to preserve in my teaching and research.

So, this complex mixture of identities gets particularly sticky in university classrooms or teacher-researcher collaboratives, where students and teachers often bring both expectations and lived realities of hierarchical and gendered relationships into our work together. For, of course, they too have received similar messages about the roles of women and men, of professors and students, from the institutions in which we do our work. And, depending on their varied gendered, raced, and classed positions too, I may well be not only the one who "should" know, who "should" impart knowledges and determine research agendas for them, but also the one who "should" do those things in a nurturing and supportive way.

What has happened for me in the past few years, especially in the context of my six-year collaborative work with five other teacher-researchers who work in K-12 settings (Miller, 1990), is that I have been able to allow those various expectations to collide. Our teacher-researcher collaborative has enabled me to express my doubts, frustrations, and puzzlements about how to collaborate with classroom teachers when I am in a traditional role of greater power in terms of research agendas, processes, and evaluations. I have felt and heard the ambiguities that these teachers have expressed about their initial expectations that I should "know" how we would do our collaborative research. I have been confronted with their suspicions that I "knew" and just wasn't telling them (one teacher suggested that maybe I was doing sort of an "inquiry" or "discovery" approach to teacher research with them). And we have had to deal with their sometimes still-erupting anger that I, in fact, didn't "know" how to go about this whole thing of constructing a critical teacher-researcher collaborative. And I have struggled with my "good girl" tendencies to try to comply with their expectations so that they would still want to work with me, would still, in fact, like me.

Thus, for me, hierarchical structures of the institution, which often indicate that I should posit myself as "expert," particularly in relation to my work with students and with K-12 teachers, have collided with my own and others' internalizations of, for example, particular gendered, raced, aged, or classed versions of how I should be in the world in relation to others' needs and interests. Those collisions shattered any unitary version that I might have had of myself in the role of

professor, for example. And those collisions have created some momentarily cleared spaces in which I could examine the ways in which any unitary category of analysis, such as "gender," must be considered in relationship to myriad other categories that describe my positions in the world.

And so, I still struggle, within attempts to effect reciprocal and collaborative interactions and relationships in my teaching, researching, and consulting, to claim neither "expert" nor "good girl" as my total identity. So, to only talk about "gender equity" as a guiding construct in these struggles would be to reduce some complex intersections of social positionings and identities in my life to a one-dimensional version. I could be constructed, within the confines of "gender equity" framing, for example, as a woman academic who is struggling to be listened to, respected, and acknowledged as a knowledge creator in the same ways a male academic would be in particular educational situations and contexts. But, given the examples I've offered above, that version would reduce the ways in which my gender, my class, my race, my sexual identities, my academic roles, and my internalizations of others' expectations for those positionings make my particular identities and contexts as a woman academic mean differently than those of male academics.

So, how do we get to the undersides of framings such as "gender equity" within political contexts of teacher research? What might we do to address, rather than avoid, the messy intersections and collisions of identities and social positionings within teacher research? How do we look for ways in which the framing of issues of choice, of opportunity, of equal access, of "equity" can limit our visions of what teacher research might address and enact within agendas for school reform and change by defining them only in relation to already established male hierarchies, forms, structures, or practices?

I continue to debate such questions as a member of our teacher-researcher group that has been meeting for six years. And yes, the women in our group, the five out of six members, still struggle over gendered notions of ourselves as teachers, as administrators, and we worry that we don't have all the right answers all the time, like we think we're supposed to if we're doing our

jobs well. The two women, Beth and Marjory,[3] who have moved from 20-year classroom teaching positions into administrative roles within the past three years, also talk about feeling added pressure to perform well, just because they are women in the still-predominately male field of educational administration. And we all worry that our caring about others is seen only as a "woman's attribute" rather than as a way of being in the world that we think would be good for everyone to try. We struggle with issues around being "good girls" who have become "good teachers," and we also see how being "good girls" is, in fact, very different for each of us.

And yes, Kevin, the male school psychologist in our group, worries about how he is constructed as "the leader" as well as the "problem solver" in the elementary school where he does much of his counseling. And he tells us about playing golf with the high school principal and sometimes even the district superintendent and about how he knows that we wouldn't have the same access to those men, even though they often don't talk about school at all as they make their way around the course. "It's just the access that sets me apart, I know," Kevin has said on more than one occasion to us. And, he notes that, Beth and Marjory, although they are now administrators, would not be invited to go play golf with these particular male administrators.

So, in some ways, some of these struggles are over issues of "equity." Who has access to the powers that often structure the form and content of our daily lives as educators? How much of that power in school is still male-dominated, and what can women, as teachers, as researchers, as students, do to gain access? Those are important questions if one wants to move up and into the existing power structures, to "gain power" in ways that still form hierarchies and still exclude or

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[3]These names are those of the pseudonyms that the five teachers chose to use in the book describing our first two and one-half years together. They chose not to use their own names because much of what they researched in our work together involved others who also could be implicated in the political nature of much of these teachers' inquiries. This issue of naming, of course, constitutes another aspect of the political context of teacher-research, just as does the issue of authorship. These teachers chose not to participate in the writing of the book, because writing most often is not valued or rewarded in K-12 schooling contexts. They saw writing as work that I, as an academic, "do." They did, however, participate in the framing, in the selection of the vignettes that comprised the collective narrative, and in the revising and editing of those selections for the published book version of our teacher-researcher collaborative.

push others to the margins of decision making, curriculum construction, textbook selection, or determining of research agendas. And that's my trouble with the notion of "gender equity" here--it could construct teacher research as a way of reinforcing existing structures that ultimately are predicated on exclusion--or at least on the notion of "insiders and outsiders" as a "natural" part of any organizational structure. If one "does" teacher research, does that mean that one could have more access to the powers that be, to the people who control the what and where and how of schooling?

That's how some versions of teacher research might be constructed--as a way of "having a say" in the reforming and restructuring of schools. And yes, of course, I want to have a say, but in ways that allow me to disrupt the boundaries of what is "sayable." And I want other teachers who work in K-12 classrooms to be able to say what they want in terms of creating curriculum, of determining goals, of constructing equitable forms and arenas in which they and their students can learn together. But I also want us to be able to question the very power relations that characterize efforts at school reform and that set boundaries for what is sayable and unsayable within those efforts as they are being constructed. I want us to be able to question how our roles as teachers, as students, as parents, as administrators, are socially constructed in multiple ways that rewrite the category "gender" each time they intersect and even collide when we begin to consider ourselves within framings of our gender, race, class, age, physical ableisms, sexual preferences--within the various and myriad identities that we inevitably bring to our educational intentions, processes, and forms. And I want us to be able to research those kinds of questions within the contexts of "teacher research."

For it is within contexts that include teachers' and students' participation in school reform that I think we can truly begin to engage in work that interrupts, questions, and challenges all notions of equity that isolate gender from other positionings and that maintain men as the standard up to which women are to be brought. Teacher-researchers claim to situate our questions and dilemmas within the daily struggles of teachers and students. And those struggles are much more complex than any isolating notion of gender or any comparative notion of equity can address.

Placing teacher research within political contexts thus requires us to attend to the complexities of power relations that intersect and collide in the hallways and classrooms where we meet daily, yet differently.

Sandra (Sam) Hollingsworth Responds:

Janet, you have raised many complex and provocative issues about discussing teacher research in terms of gender equity. I am personally empathetic with your views since I have shared similar experiences, feelings, and confusions, and also because I share your thoughtful enthusiasm about the possibility for this work. Opening to the potential of full generative participation in our lives and work--not just contributing to the existing hierarchical power of school structures as they presently exist--educators now have the opportunity to challenge, deconstruct, selectively integrate, and/or rewrite some of our gender-designated roles as "experts" and "caregivers." In the introspection of our multiply backgrounded lives, we are all each and more. In the power-driven frames which problematically organize the lives of teachers in "a woman's profession" (see Laird, 1987), however, we might be less able to recognize those possibilities. Without addressing head-on the subtle gendered positioning and expectations for teacher (e.g., "technician" and "caregiver") and researcher/policymaker/administrator (e.g., "power broker" and "evaluator"), then tolerance of, compliance with, or resistance to the existing schooling structures which are predicted on such exclusionary divisions might appear to be our only reasonable options.

As you bring to my consciousness many problematic issues in the framing of teacher research and gender equity, Janet, you also underscore ways that multiple and shifting identities too often are lost within the confines of the existing political structures of schooling. You remind me, also, of the recent American Association of University Women report--How Schools Shortchange Girls (Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, 1992)--which speaks to the complexity of the equity issues which emerged from the study, even with an investigative focus on gender. The report details, for example, how girls (in general) receive significantly less attention from classroom teachers than boys, but African-American girls have fewer interactions with

teachers than do white girls, despite evidence that they attempt to initiate interactions more frequently. The authors of the report recommend more support and release time for teacher-initiated research on the many curricular and classroom variables that affect student learning, paying particular attention to gender.

In response to these and other provocative challenges that you brought to mind, I want to attempt to address the question of equity as an achieved integration and expansion of multiply grounded values; rather than speak of "gender equity" in terms of women attaining equality with men's standards, address the continuous transformation in both male and female life roles with respect to rewriting the occupations of "teacher" and "researcher." I want to begin the discussion of integration by writing about the surprises in my life and work which have come with new ways of seeing and appreciating the values and modes traditionally associated with and devalued as "women's ways." I begin with an emphasis on gender, not to the exclusion of the other important and interconnected identities of myself but to honor its position as the first facet to catch my attention about my own differences--an awareness, pointed out to me by courageous women--which led me to see the interconnectedness of other differences that you also have so gently and persuasively explicated. By recognizing and opening my life to notice not only the differences but the links between the multiple identities of gender, race, class, age, abelisms and sexual identities--bonds such as care, reverence, listening, gentle questioning, hope, storying and restorying, as well as specialized expertise and political positionings and possibilities--I've been fortunate to integrate or bring to equity in my own life and my work the previously silenced, unintegrated, and unremembered ways of being which were part of my girl and womanhood. I've been able to use those bonds as center ground, from which I could open up my teaching, my research methods, my writing, and attempt--as you argue, Janet--to disrupt the boundaries of the known by creating intricate connections between them.

Over the years, for example, I have come to look upon my teaching as research. I've learned the benefit of joining research and practice into a single concept which defies the elevation of "researcher" (and the stereotypical qualities which accompany the term) from "teacher." In the

integrative transformation of praxis, questioning has replaced certainty; my role as a teacher "expert" has become integrated with my many other teaching, learning, and living roles. This multifaceted view of my work was not always present. My early teaching stance with preservice teachers as a graduate student involved passing along what I knew in a well-socialized hierarchy from expert to novice. The perspective was one of a professional duty or obligation--backed by positivistic arguments for information processing and the culture of my graduate education in educational psychology. I then "researched" other teachers' learning objectively and dispassionately in terms of how well they understood the knowledge that I presented them in class. As long as my teaching context remained within the confines of university course work, my own role or instructional stance also seemed to remain intact. I had no external stimulus for change. And the internal stimulus--a sense of discomfort in my judgmental, fragmented, and nonconnective stance as an educator--was too deeply buried under school- and society-molded expectations of what successful adults and scholars ought to look like. The heart of my girl-child who loved Alice-in-Wonderland games where everyone shall win and all shall have prizes went unremembered.

The next chapter of my story to embrace teaching as research began as I graduated and took a job as an assistant professor at the University of California, Berkeley. With a little more academic freedom and permission from the California climate to examine my soul, I was now interested in the longitudinal effect of teachers' learning on my teaching: the boundaries of my classroom walls expanded. I collaborated with research assistants to study my teaching systematically as an influence on 28 new teachers' learning in two literacy courses and as applied to practicum settings (see Hollingsworth, 1989). Like any teacher who has difficulty attending both to the flow of the lesson and the sense students make of it, I found this sort of pulling back to be very useful. Systematically analyzing these longitudinal data allowed me to become more precise in my understanding of preservice teachers' content learning. I began to see where the new teachers' attention rested and what personal and institutional features (including my teaching)

seemed to be blocking their learning and transfer of curricular and pedagogical theories of literacy to classroom settings.

To learn more, I continued to follow, observe and interview eight teachers, roughly representative of the full sample of 28, into their fourth and fifth years of teaching. We formed a collaborative group of six women and one man, meeting every month socially to talk about their literacy practices. What happened at that point was that the earlier and formal boundaries of teacher and researcher turned into a relationship of friends. I began to know these teachers as full, complex, knowing and caring people, to listen to their own senses of expertise, to their own ways of researching their teaching. I learned that, as their instructor, I had omitted attention to the inclusive concept of curriculum which they saw as necessary for learning to teach: the urban environments to which most of them were assigned, the school-based socialized or normative beliefs about teaching and learning which countered their own senses of educating, and the means of seeking continued education and support in those difficult beginning years. Conversational analyses of their learning in this teacher-research collaborative taught me--among other things--that until these new teachers had an opportunity to talk about their basic concerns with social interaction and relationship issues--issues which were personally important to them--they could not well-attend the content and curriculum of literacy (see Hollingsworth, 1992). These teachers had awakened in me a sense of caring for them in relationship to me and all of our remembered, unremembered and potential identities; I wanted to change my stance as an educator--to free both them and myself to the full potential of teaching and learning that we might create together.

Simultaneously, changes in my personal and professional life made me look inward and name the particular features about me--woman, author, Southern-born, single parent, child-abuse survivor, professor, artist--as if they mattered to my way of representing myself in the world and required voice. As if they were not variables which could be neutralized and devalued. I wanted to reclaim my many-faceted selves into the adult being of my teaching, writing and research.

The result of such a collision between my roles of expert, learner, researcher, critic, friend and caregiver in the collaborative teacher-research setting led me to a new chapter in my

understanding of teaching as research. To overcome both my own limitations within the boundaries of university course work and the power of the gendered, classed and other silencing expectations of teachers in schools, I saw that I would have to change radically my epistemological approach to practice. My new sense of my role as teacher educator moved into the philosophical, moral, and political realms. I no longer saw value in encouraging teachers to make cognitive changes by learning what worked within the same theoretical paradigm. I wanted to move outside of the known into others worlds of possibility. I hoped we could expand our epistemological boundaries by first identifying the *public* and *private* paradigms for teaching and learning we used, then critiquing our own and others' ways of knowing. To begin this process, I asked teachers to own and articulate their practical, critical, and imagined experience as valid knowledge (see Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Only by achieving a sense of equity in their own realities as teachers in "a woman's profession" with all of its problematic inequities, could they begin to make their classrooms truly equitable places to learn--in the sense of integration, transformation, and reimagination of the multiple identities emerging within their classrooms.

To encourage teachers to develop a critical perspective of teaching as research through which they could contain, evaluate and create a responsive and equitable curriculum for themselves in relationship with particular children and overcome the problematic and limiting structures of schooling, I began to use principles of feminist pedagogy and methodology in my teaching-research (see Harding, 1990; Weiler, 1988). From my learning in the teacher-research collaborative group, I brought into my courses features such as connected conversation, self-evaluation, continuous critique, shared agendas, a commitment to social change, and a valuing of specialized knowledge each of us brought to our relationships. In other words, I still had expert knowledge about literacy and each of the teachers I taught had valuable forms of knowledge that I had shut out when I considered myself and my university colleagues the only experts. It was also clear that teachers had questions and confusions which I had not been able to coach or guide because of the institutional structure of separating coursework from fieldwork, of separating my teaching from research, of separating the teachers from me in relationship. Thus, I invited their

practice-based and biographical experiences into our course, asked all of us to ask questions about our teaching and our lives, then facilitated collective work on methods for analyzing or understanding them.

In an effort to remove attention to what research questions or procedures *I* might favorably evaluate, and achieve instead the desired outcome of epistemological ownership and innovative change, I encouraged teachers to self-evaluate their learnings. Courses now developed through group consensus. We suspended attention to established solutions or methodological procedures until we were clear about our own projects and questions, how those questions came from our own personal or private theories of teaching and learning, how they varied from public or external theories, and how teaching could be viewed as research.

The dialogical relationships between my teaching, research, and relational involvement with the ongoing teacher-research collaborative group led to continual changes in all three. As the boundaries of my teaching broadened to experiences-in-relationship to the teachers and a commitment to social change, the most recent chapters of my story as teacher educator have become less those of knowledge transmission and outcome measurements and more those of cooperative and critical knowledge creation, with epistemological identification, critique, and shift as outcomes.

It is important to note again that the changes I made were more than intellectual exercises; they came about because of a quest for meaning in my own life. For example, only when I fully embraced my own need for connections and responsiveness in my personal life as a feminist scholar and opened to the intimate involvement of the teacher-research collaborate group, was I able to engage in a transformation that valued my many positions in the world, beginning with a new construction of "woman."

As I am came to know myself as a feminist educator, I not only questioned but explicitly made room for values and perspectives often associated with women's socialized experiences in my teaching and research. No longer accepting the socialized forces to reject "soft" modes of analysis and writing as was required of me in a graduate school experience dominated by cognitive

psychology, I could now joyfully reclaim and celebrate the poetry and story which were part of my life before graduate school. Narrative modes of inquiry and reporting, for example, appealed to me because narrative requires analysis in terms of connection and response; because it is an intimate rather than objective analysis of justice and productivity, right and wrong. Outcomes from narrative inquiries led me to understandings and new directions rather than explanations and prescriptions (see Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Viewed through my current reading of feminist theory, the narrative voice is a critically compassionate and relational one, where the researcher is placed in as critical a perspective as the researched. It was a position where I felt honest, honorable, equitable and whole internally and from which I could let go of the external critique of my academic colleagues who were skeptical about the value of such research.

Reclaiming my girlhood preference for narrative over formal logic, I found that the experiential wholeness of teaching research could be caringly preserved, rather than fragmented into decontextualized parts. It is partially because of that wholeness (explained by many different aspects of background including gender, race and class) that narrative became a familiar format against which the teachers in our collaborative group and I could begin to tell and understand our different stories, raise questions about our own perspectives and practices, break our silences, reclaim our unremembered voices, and re-envision our futures. As stories from ours and others' teaching questions are interwoven, the full fabric of our story might suggest ways to build an equitable narrative unity which comes from the freedom of inclusion: the opportunity to find out how individual methods and voices are validated by other perspectives, even those which appear contradictory. The restoried whole, with its beginnings not only in gender equity but in many different groundings, could become a catalyst for a deep understanding of our common work, for moving forward beyond the existing frameworks together.

<u>Janet Responds to Sam</u>

Sam, I really think that the detailing of the shifts in your identities as teacher-researcher-feminist-learner are important in illuminating the ways in which our subjectivities are never fixed. The changes that you have described, especially within the contexts of your teacher-researcher

collaborative, are similar in so many ways to mine. And yet, even though we share similar gendered, classed, and raced identities, for example, I am curious about the different ways in which we have internalized, enacted, and worked to confront the implications of those particular identities within our work as teacher-researchers.

For example, I have used the phrase, "narrative of community" (Zagarell, 1988), to describe the work of our teacher-researcher collaborative. At first glance, this seems somewhat similar to what you have described as a possibility of teacher research: "to build an equitable narrative unity which comes from the freedom of inclusion."

And yet, I still worry about the easy ways in which both of our teacher-researcher experiences, and our intensified turnings toward feminist perspectives, might be read as seamless, unitary, almost incessantly cheerful narratives of equitable and inclusive relationships with our fellow teacher-researchers and of concurrent growth and development. Instead, I want to call attention to the complexities of collaboration as a form as well as a vessel for teacher research. Those complexities include the myriad ways in which notions of unity within community get complicated by individuals' multiple and often changing subjectivities (Martin & Mohanty, 1986). Individuals' needs and desires shift, sometimes ever so subtly, within the context of collaboration, and those shifts necessarily affect working relationships as well as the direction and intentions of the research projects. To assume an achieved equity within collaboration, whether it be with a gendered, raced, or classed emphasis, for such relationships or research intentions is to ignore the ways in which those varying identities often collide or collude within ourselves.

For example, when the two female teachers-turned-administrators in our group started to talk about added pressures that they felt in assuming traditionally male-dominated positions, tensions emerged in our teacher-researcher collaborative. In particular, the first-grade teacher, Katherine, and the elementary special education teacher, Cheryl, were upset when both Beth and Marjory started to talk about teachers as "they." As we began a heated discussion about the still often-standard teacher-administrator dichotomy, Katherine challenged both women's assertions

that it was easier to be a classroom teacher. "It's not easier!" she exclaimed. "And I can't believe that you could forget so quickly what it's like to be in a room with kids all day."

Cheryl added, "Yes, it sounds as though you have forgotten already what it's like to have kids hanging on you, you've forgotten what they smell like, what it feels like to be responsible for these children." And Kevin interjected: "And you surely don't forget what it's like to be walking down the hall and be told by your principal that you can't be carrying that cup of coffee."

This encounter, and many since this particular vignette, exemplifies, I think, the complexities of shifting roles within a teacher-researcher collaborative. Further, it exemplifies the complexities of gendered and classed positions, for example, not only within the structures of schooling in which we teach and research, but also within our collaborative. We, as a collaborative, researched with Beth and Marjory as they themselves researched and struggled with their decisions to leave the classroom and to enter educational administration. We talked about their assumption of these administrative roles in terms of gender equity within the profession, and we discussed the gendered inequities of the ways in which they, as women, felt pressure to perform in a superior manner, just so they might be considered adequate for their new roles. What we had not anticipated, but what we have had to deal with in many intense meetings, was the way in which those shifting roles and expectations created momentary rifts in the apparent unity of our collaborative. And those rifts had to do, in particular, with gendered and classed expectations, assumptions, and preconceptions about the relationships among teaching, administration, power, control, authority, and voice; as well, those rifts challenged notions of collaboration that imply constant unity or total agreement. As Katherine noted, "just because you get to see the bigger picture now as administrators, that doesn't mean that we classroom teachers don't have anything to say about that picture."

Thus, identities that emerge within the often protective circle of collaboration also often shift within the ever-changing and sometimes contradictory dynamics of collaborative teacher-researcher work. And those identities are ones which often change even more dramatically outside the collaborative context, where struggles to be heard, to be seen, to be taken seriously as

educators who regard teaching and researching as conjoined aspects of educational processes, are more pronounced, given the still-dominant technical-rational orientation in the field of education. So, a danger of collaboration as a framing for equitable forms of teacher research is that we may assume an easy association among our collaborative peers. But that association also may obscure acknowledgement of the gendered or classed or raced or aged or any other positioned ways in which we still might be silencing one another, or ignoring another's particular positioning within the group at a particular moment, or directing the nature of the group's investigations.

Thus, in order to question issues of gender equity, say, not only within the contexts of our collaboration or our teacher research emphases, but also within the very power relations that characterize efforts at school reform, I think that we must pay attention to the work of such scholars as Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989; in press), Deborah Britzman (1991), Marilyn Orner (1992), and Patti Lather (1991). These feminist researchers call into question the ways in which such categories as "voice," "subjectivity," "democracy," "validity," or "gender" are socially constructed in multiple ways that rewrite those categories each time they appear or interact or collide within particular social and cultural situations.

Further, if we intend to incorporate the category of "gender equity" as part of our intentional work within the political contexts of teacher research, we need to acknowledge not only the scholarship that has deconstructed teaching as "women's work" (Apple, 1986; Grumet, 1988 Hoffman, 1981), but also feminist perspectives that call into question the ways in which teaching, research, and curriculum have often been constructed as exclusionary. Women, people of color, and people with disabilities who are also educators have been excluded not only from educational decision making or curriculum creation but also from the very content that they teach and research.

So, before we can be "free" to include not only multiple perspectives but also our own multiple social and cultural identities and positions in relation to others, we need extended inquiry into those identities and positionings and into the very concept of freedom as relational.

And, of course, I agree that work such as the Wellesley report (Wellesley College Center, 1992) gives us continued and substantial challenge to research areas of inequity within schooling

contexts as part of our work as teacher-researchers. And yet, as you pointed out earlier, Sam, that very report demonstrates that "gender equity" cannot be separated from issues of race and class. Thus, the political contexts in which we engage as teacher-researchers, within or without collaborative framings, encourage us to attend to the complexities of inequity, for example. And that focus also requires that we acknowledge and research the ways in which our own voices are implicated in the silencing of others, the ways in which our own understandings of teacher research harbor gaps, silences, exclusions, erasures of others' experiences and understandings. Only then might I feel that we can begin to talk and act with the "freedom of inclusion."

Sam Responds to Janet

Janet, I sat outside on my porch swing to read your response to my musings about teacher research and gender equity. Except for the natural rocking of the swing and a gentle breeze moving the leaves through the morning sun around me, the scene in which I sat was so still that a male cardinal almost joined me--thinking perhaps that I was also a natural and unthreatening part of the landscape. He reconsidered at the last moment and flew off into the brush. His movement at once brought to mind the complexities of perception and intention and compelled my own movement inside the house to write to you.

The ways in which we see our connections and differences around the topic of this paper seems not only interesting but instructive. Perhaps an artifact of my "nice girl" past, but one which I currently choose to retain, I am optimistic about both the possibility and challenge of this work. Even as we write to each other, I have a sense that our common passion for understanding, deconstructing, and reimagining both teaching and research, our respect for our evolving friendship and colleagueship helps us both articulate and hold our various and shifting meanings into the topic of gender equity and leads us to be curious about how our views have been shaped by the different configurations of our lives.

Your story describes how your teacher-research group faced and worked through a major challenge to its identity when two women teachers became administrators. Even though our group has not shared that experience, I was reminded that we also have confronted many challenges and

clashes of identify in our six years of work together involving issues of equity around "teacher" and "researcher." In the beginning of our conversational meetings, I was the group's "author." I felt free to use *my* real name, since I primarily told *their* stories, using pseudonyms to protect them from political harm. As designated researcher and reporter, I was privileged in that I was both safe from risk and gained all of the credit. As our relationship developed, the teachers began to challenge my interpretations of their stories, implored me to include more of my own, and wanted to take both the political credit and the risk of claiming their own stories using their own names. Our shared stories have been written and rewritten developed around implicit and explicit themes of equity, understanding, inclusion and vulnerability within our group, but, as you might expect, have had much more political influence in my world of the university than in the teachers' worlds of the public school. Even when teachers pointed out their researched contributions to school officials, few really bothered to read or comment on their work.

Response from university faculty is often similarly unconfirming. Mary Dybdahl is still angry that she was "patted" on the head by a university researcher after a brilliant presentation at a national conference. At another state-level conference she was asked to sit down, so that the real expert in our group [me] could speak. The "us and they" of many such relationships is unconscionable but not unspeakable. Leslie Minarik and Jennifer Smallwood (women teachers in our group of different colors) recently challenged both the language and the patronization of university folk at a regional meeting on teacher research as "exclusionary."

Recently our group met on retreat in the Sierra Nevada mountains to work on a forthcoming book about our collaborative lives. One of our tasks was to work through many tensions about perceived framework for our stories. Of central importance was the way in which we have brought to consciousness, deconstructed, and reconstructed our work as teacher-researchers within our group and within the problematic stereotype of teaching as "women's work" --and as institutionally separate from research. That theme, plus other discussions, confrontations, and reinterpretations of what we mean by classed differences, differences which might be shaped by sexual orientation, race, family dynamics, and economic positioning gave a depth to our work

which would have been overlooked had we elected to write from our "good girl" and "well-mannered boy" writing stances to present a cheerful, seamless voice of unitary framing.

Your comments, Janet, reminded me that it is important to include these tensions in our stories: that we have rarely come to an honest consensus on any issue, yet we can talk about our similarities. We never feel the same from the time our talk is uttered, to the time it is transcribed, to the time it is discussed as it gets ready for print. Yet we honor our differences as part of our process, as we work to bring to equity our many-situated positions. Anthony Cody, the only male teacher in our group and a new father, uses "feminist" as one framing for his teaching research. Karen Teel, a teacher, doctoral student and mother of three, sees her work differently, placing much more emphasis on the dynamics of parenting as much more important to her work. So we talk to each other about our views, argue, take walks to soothe damaged feelings, write to each other, hug, try to understand, love, allow our clarified understandings to collide, see old situations from new perspectives, reconstruct our views and write again. We feel increasingly free to present some of our framings to the outside world in public print, while others will remain within our group. The frames which kept reoccurring over and over again across the multiple writings of our experiences--which we choose to make public from all of our varying perspectives--was our relationship to each other, our work and our world, and our attempts to dismantle, reorder and reinvent the strong but subtle gender-socialized perceptions of our life roles.

Janet, you have clearly and importantly pointed out the danger of using <u>any</u> uni-dimensional framing to achieve equitable forms of teacher research. You point is well taken, yet leaves problematic the figure/ground perspectives of gendered socializations, given the current realities of our positions as teachers and a teacher educator. Some of my other colleagues feel that our group's attention to gender in this work is an indication of our emerging feminism, our evolutionary nature, and even our lack of sophistication. We have clearly come to know that we are all at different points of understanding the gendered, classed, raced, and other-identified nature of our work as teacher-researchers. Those points--like the sunlight on the leaves this morning--never really become fixed, or even still. I see them all in dynamic relationship to each other, to our

changing frameworks for our work and our lives, and to our journey toward the "freedom of inclusion."

In a similar way, I sense that the inclusion of my reading of teacher research and gender equity with yours, with the teachers and administrators in our groups, and with others who read this paper, will provide a stimulus to rethink and challenge all of our framings, including those of "gender," "relations," "freedom," and "equity." As for the process of writing and rewriting this paper together, I am delighted in our newly discovered connections and differences and am exited about the possibilities that our combined voices might envision.

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